

CATHOLIC TALES

BY DOROTHY L. SAYERS

OXFORD B. H. BLACKWELL.

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CATHOLIC TALES AND CHRISTIAN SONGS BY DOROTHY LEIGH SAYERS, AUTHOR OF "OP. I."

"Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell,
A Catholic tale have I to tell,
And a Christian song have I to sing
While all the bells in Arundel ring."

H. BELLOC.

S 274 CT

¶ And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master; and kissed Him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend . . .

JESUS, if, against my will,
I have wrought Thee any ill,
And, seeking but to do Thee grace,
Have smitten Thee upon the face,
If my kiss for Thee be not
Of John, but of Iscariot,
Prithee then, good Jesus, pardon
As Thou once didst in the garden,
Call me "Friend," and with my crime
Build Thou Thy passion more sublime.


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¶ "Rex Doloris" is reprinted, by the courtesy of the Editor, from *The New Witness.*

DESDICHADO

℣. This is the Heir; come let us kill Him.

℣. Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?

CHRIST walks the world again, His lute upon His back,
His red robe rent to tatters, His riches gone to rack,
The wind that wakes the morning blows His hair about His face,
His hands and feet are ragged with the ragged briar's embrace,
For the hunt is up behind Him and His sword is at His side, . . .
Christ the bonny outlaw walks the whole world wide,

Singing: "Lady, lady, will you come away with Me,
Lie among the bracken and break the barley bread?
We will see new suns arise in golden, far-off skies,
For the Son of God and Woman hath not where to lay His head."

Christ walks the world again, a prince of fairy-tale,
He roams, a rascal fiddler, over mountain and down dale,
Cast forth to seek His fortune in a bitter world and grim,
For the stepsons of His Father's house would steal His Bride from Him;
They have weirded Him to wander till He bring within His hands
The water of eternal youth from black-enchanted lands,

Singing: "Lady, lady, will you come away with Me
Or sleep on silken cushions in the bower of wicked men?
For if we walk together through the wet and windy
weather,
When I ride back home triumphant you will ride beside
Me then."

Christ walks the world again, new-bound on high
emprise,
With music in His golden mouth and laughter in His
eyes;
The primrose springs before Him as He treads the dusty
way,
His singer's crown of thorn has burst in blossom like
the may,
He heedeth not the morrow and He never looks behind,
Singing: "Glory to the open skies and peace to all
mankind."

Singing: "Lady, lady, will you come away with Me?
Was never man lived longer for the hoarding of his
breath;
Here be dragons to be slain, here be rich rewards to
gain . . .
If we perish in the seeking, . . . why, how small a thing
is death!"

THE TRIUMPH OF CHRIST

GOD met man in a narrow place,
And they scanned each other face to face.

God spoke first: "What ails you, man,
That you should look so pale and wan?"

Quoth man: "You bade me conquer harm
With no strength but this weak right arm.

"I would ride to war with a glad consent
Were I, as You, omnipotent."

God said: "You show but little sense;
What triumph is there for omnipotence?"

Said man: "If You think it well to be
Such a thing as I, make trial and see."

God answered him: "And if I do,
I'll prove Me a better Man than you."

God conquered man with His naked hands,
And bound him fast in iron bands.

CHRIST THE COMPANION

WHEN I've thrown my books aside, being petulant and weary,
And have turned down the gas, and the firelight has sufficed,
When my brain's too stiff for prayer, and too indolent for theory,
Will You come and play with me, big Brother Christ?

Will You slip behind the book-case? Will you stir the window-curtain,
Peeping from the shadow with Your eyes like flame?
Set me staring at the alcove where the flicker's so uncertain,
Then, suddenly, at my elbow, leap up, catch me, call my name?

Or take the great arm-chair, help me set the chestnuts roasting,
And tell me quiet stories, while the brown skins pop,
Of wayfarers and merchantmen and tramp of Roman hosting,
And how Joseph dwelt with Mary in the carpenter's shop?

When I drift away in dozing, will You softly light the candles
And touch the piano with Your kind, strong fingers,
Set stern fugues of Bach and stately themes of Handel's
Stalking through the corners where the last disquiet lingers?

And when we say good-night, and You kiss me on the
landing,
Will You promise faithfully and make a solemn tryst:
You'll be just at hand if wanted, close by here where
we are standing,
And be down in time for breakfast, big Brother Christ?



¶ Be ye therefore perfect.

¶ You cannot argue with the choice of the soul.

GO, bitter Christ, grim Christ! haul if Thou wilt
Thy bloody cross to Thine own bleak Calvary!
When did I bid Thee suffer for my guilt
To bind intolerable claims on me?
I loathe Thy sacrifice; I am sick of Thee.

They say Thou reignest from the Cross. Thou dost,
And like a tyrant. Thou dost rule by tears,
Thou womanish Son of woman. Cease to thrust
Thy sordid tale of sorrows in my ears,
Jarring the music of my few, short years.

Silence! I say it is a sordid tale,
And Thou with glamour hast bewitched us all;
We straggle forth to gape upon a Graal,
Sink into stinking mire, are lost and fall . . .
The cup is wormwood and the drink is gall.

I am battered and broken and weary and out of heart,
I will not listen to talk of heroic things,
But be content to play some simple part,
Freed from preposterous, wild imaginings . . .
Men were not made to walk as priests and kings.

Thou liest, Christ, Thou liest; take it hence,
That mirror of strange glories; I am I;
What wouldst Thou make of me? O cruel pretence,
Drive me not mad so with the mockery
Of that most lovely, unattainable lie!

I hear Thy trumpets in the breaking morn,
I hear them restless in the resonant night,
Or sounding down the long winds over the corn
Before Thee riding in the world's despite,
Insolent with adventure, laughter-light.

They blow aloud between love's lips and mine,
Sing to my feasting in the minstrel's stead,
Ring from the cup where I would pour the wine,
Rouse the uneasy echoes about my bed . . .
They will blow through my grave when I am dead.

O King, O Captain, wasted, wan with scourging,
Strong beyond speech and wonderful with woe,
Whither, relentless, wilt Thou still be urging
Thy maimed and halt that have not strength to go? . . .
Peace, peace, I follow. Why must we love Thee so?

THE WIZARD'S PUPIL

¶ It was written with red and black ink, and much of it he could not understand; but he put his finger on a line and spelled it through. At once the room was darkened, and the house trembled. OLD FAIRY TALE.

TIME like a sullen school-boy stands
Beside the Wizard's knee,
The book of life between his hands,
And spells out painfully
The crabbed Christ-cross row,
The Alpha and the O.

His grimy fingers slowly trace
Each odd, repellent sign
In a dull fear to lose the place;
His voice, with listless whine,
Drawls through the scheduled hour
The syllables of power.

While Zeta is so like to Xi
Small thought has he to spare
For what the screed may signify,
(The Wizard in His chair
Smiles, knowing ere He look
All that is in the book).

But sometimes ill and sometimes well,
Reluctant and perplexed,
He gropes and stammers through the spell
From one sound to the next;
And when the last is read
God's Word wakes the dead.

THE DEAD MAN

ONE that had sinned against the light
Lay self-murdered under night.

There came three men and walked thereby,
And at the cross-roads saw him lie.

Said the first: "I say that this is sin,
And none may answer for him therein."

The second: "Nay, we should have seen to this;
His blood as the blood of Abel is."

The third: "It is but the common case,
The weak thing beaten in the race."

Said the second: "At length he has fall'n on sleep;"
"Now," said the first, "shall he learn to weep;"

But the third said: "If he should live again
'Twill be but as mist or a drop of the rain."

Said the third: "Well, well! let the body rest;
If soul there be, be it banned or blest."

But

But the second: "We'll call it 'mind unsound'
And let him be buried in holy ground."

The first said: "This is the best to do."
With his hand he hammered the ash-stake through.

Now, one was the devil, and one was good,
And One of the three had died on rood.



THE CARPENTER'S SON

¶ And the cedar of the house within was carved with knops and open flowers, ... and he overlaid the cherubims with gold.

I MAKE the wonderful carven beams
Of cedar and of oak
To build King Solomon's house of dreams,
With many a hammer-stroke,
And the gilded, wide-winged cherubims.

I have no thought in My heart but this:
How bright will be My bower
When all is finished; My joy it is
To see each perfect flower
Curve itself up to the tool's harsh kiss.

How shall I end the thing I planned?
Such knots are in the wood!
With quivering limbs I stoop and stand,
My sweat runs down like blood . . .
I have driven the chisel through My hand.

THE DRUNKARD

¶ And she ran and he ran till they came to the Bridge of One Hair, and she got over but the giant couldn't.
OLD FAIRY TALE.

¶ Fac me cruce inebriari
Et cruore Filii. POPE INNOCENT III.

¶ If bodies delight thee, praise God for them.
S. AUGUSTINE.

¶ All things are lawful. S. PAUL.

Christ and the Stoic, walking; a crowd; a drunkard. Christ speaketh:

THAT drunkard, in the fading light
Capering along a lofty wall . . .
The crowd say, Stoic (they are right!):
"If he were sober, he would fall."

. . . So you fear visionary things?
Dream-miracles illustrious?
The splendours of strange, purple kings,
The pomps of Elagabalus?

Gold griffins and green malachite,
And vessels carved of porphyry?
Lest, stumbling to the left or right,
Like Elagabalus you die?

Vainly you know the pathway wide
Enough to walk, not more nor less . . .
The gulf that holds you terrified
To be nought else than nothingness!

Cast down your eyelids; do not look
Where far, fantastic heavens gleam,
Merrier than any story-book
And madder than a madman's dream.

Your sober, calculating feet
Will fail you on the fearful ridge . . .
Go, plant them flatly in the street,
Leave Me alone to face the bridge,

Who, on the small, sharp, single hair
Strung tight across the blank inane,
Run forth unfaltering, free from care,
Made drunken with My cup of pain.



JUSTUS JUDEX

¶ I judge no man.

¶ God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. He that believeth on Him is not judged: he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed.

THERE came three men of the latter age, and stood at Peter's gate,
And searched through all the courts of Heaven to find some advocate;
The Eternal Father shook His head: "I know not who they be . . .
I never have heard in all their heart one thought of love to Me.

"How sayest thou, Lady Mary, that wast the carpenter's wife,
Did they lose the vision of All that Is in the little cares of life?"
"Alas! alas! their hearts were barred from the hallowed, humble things . . .
I have no knowledge of them before Thee, King of kings."

The Father looked on all the Saints, from Paul to Magdalene,
That wit so well what a sinner is, from the sinners that they have been,
But every eye was casten down, and dumb was every lip,
The Saints know nothing of any man that scorns man's fellowship.

Then fear came over those flaccid men: "Thou wilt
not damn us thus?
We led such pretty, delightsome lives . . . will no man
speak for us?"
The Father furrowed His brow in doubt: "It may be
there is one . . .
Canst Thou find aught to say for these, Prince Jesus,
My meek Son?"

O then up rose Prince Jesus Christ, the fieriest Lord in
Heaven,
His feet clear as the burning brass among the candles
seven,
His words were swifter than edgèd swords, they were
more sharp than wine:
"Though My Father and mother cast them off, I claim
the men for Mine.

"How shall I say I know not these, when these knew
me so well,
They stormed all day on the doors of Heaven to drag
Me out to hell?
They were blind to the banners and deaf to song, they
drowsed beside the ships,
But the call of the Cross could startle them up with fury
on their lips.

They

"They caught like babes with witless hands at the Babylonian beast;
They cast the cloak of their patronage on the blank creeds of the East,
Where God shrinks down to a shrivelling point, and all things shrink with Him;
They bowed to Amon-ra for a jest, to Isis for a whim;

"They called on the Dwellers beneath the Door, and knew not what they did;
They filched the magic of ageless gods from the guarded pyramid;
They fashioned them bracelets of sacred jade, and brooches of scarab-wings;
They babbled the names unspeakable of strong and merciless Things;

"And they set the soft, fierce Cyprian in their chambers, and took no note
If the bond of Baal was on their breast, the phallus upon their throat;
But they hated and feared the crucifix, and they could not pass it by,
But thrust it forth with spitting and sneers, for they knew that I am I.

"I walk in the world in judgment, to sunder and not
condemn;
There be none so sunk and sodden but I lay My hand
on them,
And if yet in the palsied body one answering pulse can
leap,
Whether to love or hatred, they are not dead but sleep.

"Therefore I swear, O Father and God, I swear by Thy
mighty throne,
With the blood that was shed on Calvary I bought
them for Mine own;
It shall dye them with shame to scarlet, it shall sear
them as burning coals,
For they spilt and trampled it into the mire, and it shall
save their souls.

"Unbar the gates, good Peter, and for twice a thousand
years
Let them writhe 'neath the rod of My pity and the
insult of My tears,
Till hate is bound to the wheels of love, and sin is made
My slave,
And I bring Mine own from the deep again, My dead
back from the grave."

¶ And while he sat there they saw a lady, on a pure white horse . . . coming along the highway that led from the mound; and the horse seemed to move at a slow and even pace . . . And he took a horse and went forward. And he came to an open, level plain, and put spurs to his horse; and the more he urged his horse, the further was she from him. Yet she held the same pace as at first . . . "Lady," said he, "wilt thou tell me who thou art?" "I will tell thee, Lord," said she. "I am Rhiannon."

THE STORY OF PWLL PRINCE OF DYVED.

LOOKING out of my window high
Sursum cor!
I saw a merry chase go by,
E sus le cor!
I saw the merry chase go by
Before the sun was in the sky—
Sursum corda, sursum cornua,
Up, hart and horn!

The quarry went upon an ass
Sursum cor!
That soft and slowly forth did pass,
E sus le cor!
So soft and slowly forth did pass
His little hoofs upon the grass,
Sursum corda, sursum cornua,
Up, hart and horn!

And smiting with the scourge and spur,
Sursum cor!
Came king and priest and labourer,
E sus le cor!
Both priest and king and labourer,
The queen with her ladies after her,
Sursum corda, sursum cornua,
Up, hart and horn!

They sweep beside the water-mill,
Sursum cor!
An hundred yards betwixt them still,
E sus le cor!
An hundred yards betwixt them still
As they come hunting round the hill,
Sursum corda, sursum cornua,
Up, hart and horn!

And they may ride till they crack their breath
Sursum cor!
To track that quarry down to death,
E sus le cor!
They never will ride down to death
The Wizard-Man from Nazareth,
Sursum corda, sursum cornua,
Up, hart and horn!

LIGNUM VITAE

¶ And the leaves of the Tree were for the healing of the nations.

WHEN I am grown so weary, my hands can keep no hold
Of the heavy water of living, in its jar of mortal gold,
And it slips and spills in the ocean; then I shall sink to sleep
Beneath the boughs of Yggdrasil, where the sea-ways are deep,
Or peer from slumberous eyelids to see the smooth, black stem
Stretch up to the world's foundations, and know that it beareth them;
While dim through the roofs of water I shall hear, and hardly hear
How the birds of Bran the Blessed sing Aves all the year.
The waves of God will go over me, the waves and the great, green flood,
Where the ash-buds break to blossom in a red gleam like blood.
Yggdrasil, Yggdrasil! . . . the branches sweep and spread
Till the Tree of the whole world's sorrow shadows my dreaming head;
And never a wind comes near it, but the leaves swing quietly
Night and day to the swinging of the sea, of the salt sea.

CHRISTUS DIONYSUS

THERE are three gates to the city;
One is of gold, and one
Beaten of shining silver,
And one is like the sun.

By one, the laughing lovers,
By two, the quiet priests,
By three, the Lord of laughter
Rides to the vineyard feasts;

Young Dionysus
Crowned with the thorn and vine;
His feet and hands are red with blood,
His mouth is red with wine.

DEAD PAN

¶ At the hour of Christ's agony a cry of "Great Pan is dead!" swept across the waves in the hearing of certain mariners; and the oracles ceased. PLUTARCH.

¶ For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now.

¶ I fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ.

AND there was darkness over all the land
Three hours; and in the dark so wild a cry
That all men hearing sought to understand
What thing it was that in such pain must die.

But there was darkness, so that none may say
What there befel, except the midnight bird
Whose staring face is still struck white to-day
For blank amaze at all he saw and heard.

He that maintained unblinded vigil there
Told us: "There were vast shapes which loomed and [grew
Around, and He was fearfully changed: I swear
They were goat's feet the nails had stricken through.

"How mourned pale Isis, 'neath the hideous rood
Crouched in the dust! How passed in one fierce sound
Side-smitten Balder! For what grim festal food
Smoked forth the blood of Mithra to the ground?

"But Pasht my cousin, the wise African,
Looked from the judgment hall toward the North,
And knew all things fulfilled when thus began
The deathless Ritual of the Coming Forth;

"For One came treading those eternal floors
That was the Word of the tremendous Book,
Crying throughout the long-drawn corridors
So that the porters of the pylons shook:

"I am Osiris! and the gates reeled back
Before the God twin-crowned with white and red,
And an echo rose and went in the wind's track
Over the Middle Sea: Great Pan is dead! . . .
Whereat the oracles fell mute," he said.



¶ Signed with the sign of His Cross and salted with His salt. S. AUGUSTINE.

"WHEREFORE wilt thou linger, Lady Persephone?
The sheaves are gathered, the vintage is done,
Bacchus through the ivy leaves laughing with his satyrs
Calls us to the feasting, and the ripe, red sun
Drops like an apple, tumbling to the westward,
The shout of the Maenads is merry on the hill,
Why do the wheat-ears fall from thy fingers?
Whom dost thou look for, lingering still?

"Whom dost thou look for? Here is one to woo thee,
Brown-cheeked, beautiful, lissom as the larch,
Lightsome, slender, blossomy with kisses,
Merrier-footed than the winds in March;
Loose thy hair to dream along his shoulder,
Drowse in thy whiteness warm upon his breast,
He shall feed thee with wheaten cakes and honey
And all fair fruits that are rich and daintiest."

"I weary of the feast, I weary of the harvesting,
I weary of your music, children of the earth—
Your feet dance over the roofs of my palaces,
The halls of Hades ring hollow to your mirth;
The great King of Grief hath reft me, ravished me,
Broken me with kisses, conquered me with pain,
I have drunk his bitter wine, I have eaten of His pomegranates,
Can find no savour in the honeycomb again."

"Wherefore wilt thou linger, Lady Persephone,
When sheaves are gathered and the vintage is done,
And Bacchus through the ivy leaves laughing with his satyrs
Calls us to the feasting, and the ripe, red sun
Drops like an apple, tumbling to the westward,
While the shout of the Maenads echoes from the hill?"
"Ere the round moon rise ruddy on the corn-shocks
The Lord of Hades shall have me at His will."



SACRAMENT

AGAINST ECCLESIASTS.

BETWEEN the Low Mass and the High,
Between the Altar and my cell,
I met Christ and passed Him by,
And now I go in fear of Hell.

My dying brother Ninian
Confessed himself to me and said:
"I find the Christ in every man,
But how comes He in wine and bread?"

I cursed my brother as he died,
"Absolvo" I would not repeat,
I bare away the Crucified,
I would not sign his breast and feet.

I lifted Christ above my head,
I kneeled to Him, I bare Him up,
And Christ cried to me from the bread,
Christ cried upon me from the cup:

"What is this bitter sin of thine,
So little to have understood, . . .
To find Me in the bread and wine
And find Me not in flesh and blood?

"Go, say thy Mass for Ninian,
That, when he comes to Heaven, maybe
His prayer shall save thee, righteous man . . .
If he can find the Christ in thee!"

SION WALL

¶ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

AS I was walking by Sion wall
A wonder sight I came to see,
And that was Peter and John and Paul
Casting the dice by Calvary tree.

"What is this game that ye have found,
Peter and Paul and fair, sweet John?
O lift your eyes a little from the ground
And see what ye shall look upon.

"O Mother, Mother, ease My head,
O set thy hand against My back; . . .
So many years and I am not dead
But rive in sunder on the rack.

"I am full weary of My groans,
I weep so fast, I cannot see,
My children gamble with dead men's bones,
And I may count the bones of Me.

"Now rede Me, Mother, and rightly rede,
What is this game, and what the stake?" . . .
"My dear, they play for the seamless weed
I wove so whitely for Thy sake.

They

"They cast the dice by six and three,
They cry a match, they call a main,
They have no time to pause and see
How Thou art crucified again."

"O leave your game," St. Maudleyn said,
"And let the robe be whose it list,
But loose the hands that blessed my head,
Set free the feet that I have kissed."

As I walked by Sion wall
A wonder sight was in mine eyes,
How that Peter and John and Paul
By Calvary tree sat, casting dice.



BYZANTINE

℣. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and to-day and for ever.

I SIT within My Father's house, the Lord God crucified,
My feet upon the altar-stone set straitly side by side,
My knees are mighty to uphold, My hands outstretched to bless,
My eyelids are immutable to judge unrighteousness.

What though the bitter winds of war lay waste the house of prayer?
They cannot shake My quiet robe nor stir My folded hair,
I wrestled in Gethsemane, I cried and I was slain,
Never, for any strife of men, to strive nor cry again.

I sit within My Father's house, with changeless face to see
The shames and sins that turned away My Father's face from Me;
Be not amazed for all these things, I bore them long ago
That am from everlasting God, and was and shall be so.

EPIPHANY HYMN

℣. Nations shall come to Thy light and kings to the brightness of Thy rising.

LORD CHRIST, and have we found Thee then,
Desire of all the ages,
In fashion as the woman's Seed, conceived and born of her?
Behold Thy pilgrims, mighty Child, and smile upon the sages
That from so far a land have brought their incense, gold and myrrh.

To Thee, to Thee, through countless years of blind and bitter groping,
The reek of sacrifice went up beneath the idols' feet,
To Thee the piteous prayers of men, in trembling and in hoping,
That satest in the hill of Jove, and in Osiris' seat.

From all the hearts that learned to love and look for no rewarding,
Still faithful to the best they knew, and were not bought nor sold,
From all dim dreams of holiness beyond the world's affording,
With toil and sweat was hammered out Thy kingly crown of gold.

White is Thy bearing-cloth, but Thou shalt have a red arraying
With blood of all that bare Thy pain, and knew not what they bare,
Thy stripes and shames and agonies, Thy wounds and guiltless slaying,
The hemlock and the myrrh are Thine, the gall and vinegar.

Arise, O Orient Splendour, rise and shine to all men living,
From east and west their cry is heard, their very instant cry,
Arabia, Saba, Tharsis kneel, their richest treasures giving,
Stand forth, O Jesus, justified in Thine Epiphany.



CAROL

THE Ox said to the Ass, said he, all on a Christmas night:
"Do you hear the pipe of the shepherds a-whistling over the hill?
That is the angels' music they play for their delight,
'Glory to God in the highest and peace upon earth, goodwill' . . .
Nowell, nowell, my masters, God lieth low in stall,
And the poor, labouring Ox was here before you all."

The Ass said to the Ox, said he, all on a Christmas day:
"Do you hear the golden bridles come clinking out of the east?
Those are the three wise Mages that ride from far away
To Bethlehem in Jewry to have their lore increased . . .
Nowell, nowell, my masters, God lieth low in stall,
And the poor, foolish Ass was here before you all."

FAIR SHEPHERD

FAIR Shepherd must weep
He has lost His sheep
And cannot tell where to find them;
Far from their home
They wander alone
And never will look behind them.

He lay by night
In His chamber bright
And dreamed He saw them dying,
And when He awoke
His heart it was broke,
For He heard them still a-crying.

Then up He took
His staff and crook,
Determined for to find them;
He found them indeed
But they gave Him no heed
And cast His words behind them.

He was haled away
On a Good Friday
To Calvary Hill hard by,
Mocked and denied,
Struck through the side
And hung on a Tree to die.

Through death and hell
He searched as well,
And still in the world doth roam;
He hath done what He could,
As a fair Shepherd should,
To bring His lost sheep home.



A SONG OF PARADISE

SING a song of Paradise
Far above the skies,—
Four-and-twenty Elders
And Monsters full of eyes!
Heaven's gates are opened,
They all begin to sing,
Playing ball with golden crowns
Round about the King.

The King is in His counting-house,
Counting His elect,
The Queen comes from her chamber
Royally bedecked
With chrysoprase and amethyst
And jacinth without price . . .
Now is not this a pretty song
To sing of Paradise?



CAROL FOR OXFORD

WHEN all the Saints that are in Heaven keep
Christmas at the board,
Our Lady Mary calls a health before her Son
our Lord,
Says: "Let us sing the fairest town that is in all Your
earthly crown;
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell
To the Bells of Oxenford!"

Then saith the Holy Trinity: "There be We well
adored;"
Saith John to Mary Maudleyn, "There we walk across
the sward;"
And All the Souls that lived on earth lift up their voice
to swell that mirth:
"Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell
To the Bells of Oxenford!"

King Jesus saith: "That will I well, thereof rest you
assured,
For I have there a dwelling fair and a Church with aisles
so broad;
So let us drink at Christmas time to all that dwell by
Great Tom chime:
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell
To the Bells of Oxenford!"

THE MOCKING OF CHRIST

A MYSTERY.

¶ O My people, what have I done unto thee, or wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me.

THE REPROACHES

¶ So man made God in his own image.

THE BOOK OF GENESIS (adapted).

A HALL.

PERSONA DEI:

I AM God Who all men made,
And in human form obeyed,
Till at last I was betrayed
To hand of wicked men;
They have judged Me now to die
And prepare to crucify . . .
Yet I will save their souls thereby
And soon shall rise again.
See now how these make mock of Me!
They have not so much charity
To leave Me to My grief . . .
But they shall crown Me as their King
And work full many a hateful thing,
And never a one of them shall bring
To Me the least relief.
How have I merited, say, how,
That on this wise they use Me now
Who did them so much good?
Have I not visited My vine
That it should give Me gall for wine?
Who then hath understood?

But see, these soldiers now draw near
To bruise and buffet, gibe and jeer
And hale Me to the rood.

First Soldier: Say brothers, what thing shall we do
Until this judgment be gone through?
We must make some good sport.

Second Soldier: Let's dice.

Third Soldier: I have too thin a purse.

First Soldier: Drink.

Second Soldier: Why, the wine's as thin.

Third Soldier: Aye, worse.

Second Soldier: And here's a prisoner twice as thin . . .
I'll tell you what we shall begin.

All: What's that?

Second Soldier: We'll play now in this hall
At: Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

All: Well thought on! Fair and finely hit!
Come on! We'll make the prisoner "It" . . .
Here is a chair for Him to sit.

¶ They set Christ in the centre and go out. They return, in order, dancing and mumming. All sing the chorus, dancing about the chair.

Pope: Here come I with a robe of red
And a crown to adorn His head,
The key of heaven, the key of hell,
And the world's treasure-house as well.

¶ He setteth the robe upon Him, thrusteth the tiara over His eyes, and giveth Him three keys.

Chorus: Let us sing, whate'er befall:
Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

¶ They bow the knee.

EMPEROR: Here's a crown of another style,
Sword and sceptre for His hands,

¶ He giveth temporal crown, sword and sceptre.

POPE: Lest He use them though, meanwhile
Tie Him up with fetter-bands.

¶ They fetter Him.

CHORUS: Let us sing, whate'er befall:
Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

¶ They bow the knee.

KING: I am on Tom Tiddler's ground, *etc.*,
Picking up gold and silver.

POPE: Hence, begone thou scurvy swine,
Gold and silver all are mine.

¶ Pope and King run together and fight. They dodge about the chair. Their blows miss each other and fall upon Christ. They dance back to back and separate.

KING: Black and white, black and white,
Parchment is a pretty sight;
Who keeps quiet and serves the King
Can't go wrong in anything.

¶ He binds a charter upon Christ's mouth.

CHORUS: Let us sing, whate'er befall:
Jesus Christ is Lord of all!

¶ They bow the knee to Christ and to King.

PREACHER: Here 's a better crown,
Here 's a better gown,
Pull the old ones down.

¶ He putteth upon Christ a black gown and a shovel hat.

Take good heed and look
You still speak by the Book . . .

Never say a word
But what we've always heard.

¶ He setteth a Bible in His hand.

CHORUS: Let us sing, whate'er befall:
Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

¶ Here the people shall not bow the knee, but pull off their hats.

BISHOP: In respectable gaiters which button up tight
He might walk in the precincts on Sunday,
While His innate good taste will remind Him it's quite
Shocking form to be found there on Monday.

¶ He setteth upon Christ a bishop's apron and gaiters.

CHORUS: Let us sing whate'er befall:
Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

¶ They bow the knee.

CATHEDRAL ORGANIST: Sire, if You should wish to speak
At any moment of the week,
Kindly hit a decent A . . .
(Plagal Amens I will play);
Here we use the Magdalen Psalter . . .
No, I see no cause to alter.

¶ He placeth a psalter in Christ's hand, and conducts the singing of the chorus.

CHORUS: Let us sing whate'er befall:
Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

¶ They bow the knee.

FIRST CURATE:

¶ He setteth a tea-cup in Christ's hand.

Gossip and tea! gossip and tea!
Communicants' class at a quarter-past-three.

Oh dear! Mrs. Kidgup smells strongly of gin,
And this is God's house . . . no, she must not come in!
Magdalen? Yes, yes, but that's in the Bible,
And a quite special case . . . if it wasn't a libel.

CHORUS: Let us sing, whate'er befall:
Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

¶ They bow the knee.

SECOND CURATE:

¶ He giveth Christ a cricket-bat and pads, and beateth Him boisterously upon the back.

Here we are again, hurray!
Keep your shoulders square and play!
That's the way that heaven is won . . .
Well hit, my lad! Again, Sir . . . run!

CHORUS: Let us sing whate'er befall:
Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

¶ They bow the knee.

RESPECTABLE GENTLEMAN: Hail, our Chairman of Committee,
Much respected in the city!
Tied up tight He will not irk us! . . .
Now we'll regulate the workhouse.

¶ They dance about Christ and wind Him up in red tape.

CHORUS: Let us sing, whate'er befall:
Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

¶ They bow gravely.

PATRIOT: The Son of God goes forth to war
A kingly crown to gain . . .

We'll rake in something less or more
By following in His train.

¶ He setteth on Him a helmet.

CHORUS: Let us sing, whate'er befall:
Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

¶ They salute Him soldierly.

PATRIOT OF ANOTHER NATIONALITY:
That helmet's not the proper sort . . .
Makes Him look like poor old Jah . . .
To be a modern God He ought
To wear such weapons as mine are.

¶ He setteth on Him a helmet of another fashion.

CHORUS: Let us sing, whate'er befall:
Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

¶ The Patriots squabble and spit on each other and on Christ.

SENTIMENTAL PERSON: Gentle Jesus mild and meek
Smooth Your hair down neat and sleek;
I am sure You did not say:
"Tasteless salt is cast away" . . .
Jesus, that would never do,
Or what *would* become of You?

¶ He parts Christ's hair in the middle.

CHORUS: Let us sing, whate'er befall:
Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

¶ They bow the knee.

A MUMMER: Ho! stand away there! form a ring about!
Here comes the King of Fools with all his rout.

¶ Cometh in a Higher Critic, habited as the Roy des Sotz, with his masque.

DIONYSUS: (On an ass, with Fauns and Bacchae.)
Dionysiacs you've heard of . . .
Centuries cannot disperse us,
Crown Him, crown Him, pluck His beard off
And invest Him with the thyrsus.
Though His priests and flock despise us,
Still He's only Dionysus,
Riding high on the twin asses
Ere the summer solstice passes.

¶ He plucketh Christ by the beard and setteth the thyrsus in His hand.

OSIRIS: Bring hither the white crown and the red
For Him that is Lord of the North and South,
Risen quick from the land of the dead,
The lotus-lily within His mouth . . .
His Name is life in the courts of hell
And the porters know that Name right well.

¶ He giveth Him the red crown and the white, and a lotus flower.

ELIJAH: He does not look very like me, but they say we are the same . . .
And in any case you'll know it by the likeness of the name,
Yes, for Jesus and Elijah must be forms of the same name.

JOSHUA: Pardon me, I think you're wrong . . .
The resemblance is not strong.
Joshua and Jesus clearly
Are the same . . . or very nearly.
He puts out the sun and moon,
I can stop the sun at noon.
Two can't play at such a game,
Obviously we're the same.

ELIJAH: Never mind, let's both agree
That I am you and you are me!

¶ They crown Him with rays of the sun.

GAUTAMA:

I must beg that you will listen for a little moment, while
I point out that this is Buddha (though debased and poor in style);
I was tempted; He was tempted; other men have been so too,
And there was not much in common in the struggles we went through;
Then His Mother was a virgin, mine was married, so you see
There's no difference between us . . . like as peas in pod are we.

¶ He giveth Him the emblems of Buddha.

MITHRA (solemnly): The Lord of fire!
No man knoweth
My mystical rite,
Though many aspire.
When the Sun showeth
His forehead crowned with light
I am there, wonderful!
And the groaning, death-stricken bull
Bleeds for my sacrament.

¶ He throweth a bull's hide about Christ.

Many a hidden thing
To my mysteries went.
My priests are fallen,
Fallen and slain . . .
O I the sorrowful King!
So 'tis befallen.

¶ Briskly, with a change of tone.

This only is distinctly plain:
Whatever rites were practised at my shrine,
His must be imitations based on mine.

PRIEST OF THE GROVE OF NEMI:
"The priest who slew the slayer and shall himself be slain,"

℄ He giveth Him a knife.

GREEN PERSON:
The spirit of vegetation that renews the crops of grain,

℄ He giveth Him a garland and sickle.

BACCHAE: The orgies of Eleusis . . .

℄ They give Him the Phallic cones and emblems.

BALDER: Balder struck dead . . .

PROMETHEUS: Prometheus bringing fire from Heaven . . .

℄ He giveth Him a torch.

ADONIS: Adonis' sacred Bread.

℄ He giveth a wafer.

ALL (dancing):
We're not alike to look at, but you may be satisfied
That we're each and all the one
unmistakeable
unadulterated
primitive
unsophisticated
admirable
rational
spiritual
proved
accredited
and thoroughly homogeneous original of Jesus crucified!

CHORUS: Yes, we'll sing, whate'er befall:
Jesus Christ is Lord of all!

¶ They bow the knee.

PLATO: Pol Hercle, what a noise! and if you please
Give me the credit of my own invention.

SOCRATES: My son, I do not wish to breed dissension
But . . . did you never hear of Socrates?

¶ To Christ.

Hemlock, sir, is a far genteeler fashion
Of quitting life than is a gallows-passion.

¶ Offering hemlock.

PLATO (eagerly):
That's where you're wrong. The righteous man, say I,
Must die in shameful torment . . .

VOICE WITHIN: Crucify!

A CAPTAIN:
What folly's this? Go, shift the prisoner straight;
Bring Him to Golgotha without the gate.

¶ They put on Him His own robe.

PERSONA DEI: Now that I must come to die
Nought is left of Me, save I
Discrownèd, stript, alone;
Yet when I am lifted high
I will cause all men draw nigh
Unto My royal throne.
As I go to Golgotha
My tread shakes the earth afar,
My voice shall sound at Heaven's bar,
"Eloi, eloi, lama,
Lama sabachthani."

When My arms are stretchèd out
They shall reach the world about,
The round earth hangs upon My stout
And stark and bitter Tree.
Therefore all ye that go by
Look and see how I hang high,
If you may find the time to sigh:
"Eleison Christe."

℄. EXPLICIT.



THE HOUSE OF THE SOUL: LAY

I.

I HAVE forgotten my name and the name of my nation . . . yea,
I know alone I have lost myself, and have wandered far astray
From the land where the magical fir-trees grow, farther than far Cathay,
Farther than fair Atlantis or the hills of Tir-fa-tonn,
Or the isles of Bran and Mailduin, or the isle of Avalon;
From the city built on the rivers, where the willow-branches sway
To a quiet tune all night to the moon, and dream in the sun all day,
Where the gardens drink at the river's brink and the poppies dip to the water wan,
And the roses fall from the hot red wall like showers of light on the water grey.

Now and again by night, when the sun's last ray
Has crawled under the sky-line, and I hear the waves' array
March clip-clap after me, driving me up the bay
That is ringed with cliffs and foam-girt, and the bats wheel out anon,
Sometimes I half remember . . . and again the word is gone;
And I know that I am lonely, and the night and the sea and the spray,

Unrestingly, unhastingly, march on with no delay,
And the sheer height of the cliffs' white stands like the base of the great white throne,
And I seem to be left with God, bereft of any wisdom to plead or pray.

II.

Some one has leased me a house that is huge and dark and old
And filled with other men's dust;
I do not remember bargaining, but I pay the price in gold,
Year after year . . . a heavy price . . . and pay it because I must.
Its rafters are full of mould
And its bars, of rust;
The slates fly from the roof at every gust
Of the wind over the wold.

I should like to search my house, if only I were bold,
And scrape the mildew-crust
From cobweb-curtained corners that are quaintly-shaped and cold
And heaped with curious hangings; yet I have but little lust
To find what may not be told
Or ever discussed
Hid in a closet, maybe, or carefully thrust
Into a curtain's fold.

III.

I am afraid of my house, and I wish I knew
Who
Those other tenants were
That my landlord leased it to;
I know that they have been there,
For sometimes I find a shoe
Or a ribbon for the hair . . .
There's a grandfather clock on the stair,
And an odd little bust on a bracket, for which I don't very much care.

"They have left long since; what matter to you?" . . .
True.
But I wish my house was bare
And perfectly clean and new,
For the hollowed seat of a chair
Or a rod wrenched askew
Gives me the creeps, and I dare
Hardly breathe in an air
So thick with the dust of those who once were here, and who now are . . . where?

IV.

One day the storm was loud, the clouds clung thick and red
Close to the windows, the sky glowed like a copper pan,
The thunder muttered and cracked, the lightning leapt from its bed
Like a beast, the rain ripped down like a curtain of iron thread;

And every nook of the house was dim and strange and dread,
And odd things shuffled and squeaked in the corners, and queer feet ran
Hither and thither . . . the light was split, furled and unfurled like a fan . . .
That was a day of God's ban.

And it suddenly came to my mind that the house was inhabited
By people that hid themselves, and I swore to seek and scan
And find those flittering feet, and the voices, and what they said;
But the lightning flashed and shook me, and dizzied all my head,
And I searched each room and closet, and I sped and sped and sped
Through turret and tower and corridor, till trembling I began
To open the dungeon doors, and lo! in the deepest, an old, old man
That sat, and sang and span.

V.

And, do you know, I could not find him again!
Not once! Though I sometimes fancied I heard a strain
With a sort of humming refrain;
And I'd tip-toe down the staircase, close to the wall
To deaden my footfall;
And the singing would rise and wane,
And the flame of my secret candle shrink, and shoot up smoky and tall.

So, very quietly creeping, I'd suddenly gain
A little, low, iron-bound door, and "Not in vain
This time," I would whisper, "my pain!"
Then I'd fling the door back quick with a cheery call . . .
Silence, nothing at all!
Now is it not wholly plain
That here was something of wizardry, mystical, magical?

VI.

I hate the clock;
It first says Tick,
It then says Tock;
I hear days flick,
I see years flock,
The whole world rock;
Had I the trick
I'd like to lock
Time with a block
To make it stick.

Hic, haec and hoc,
Hoc, haec and hic,
Each, at each knock
Drop likes a brick,
Sticks like a stock
Just at the shock
Caught in the nick;
Therefore the mock
Of that red cock
Turned Peter sick.

VII.

My house upon the landward side
Looks out toward the town;
Pleasant it is all day to bide
High in the thin air rarified,
And gaze delighted down
On busy folk that drive and ride
And run and crawl and hop and stride
Like beetles black and brown.

Stiff soldiers stalk, kings pace in pride,
And statesmen stoop and frown,
The women strut and mince and glide,
Priests bustle round at Eastertide, . . .
All but their boots their broad hats hide,
The wind blows out their gown, . . .
Tramps slouch and spit, boys jump and slide,
They look all head. How I deride
King, lady, priest and clown!

VIII.

My house is haunted and hell-enchanted by a conjuror vaunted . . . hear them tripping,
Chattering, scattering, imps undaunted, here they come battering, pattering, skipping,
Dancing and prancing, gloating and glancing, bawling, brawling, leering and lipping,
Snarling and nipping
Clinging and gripping
Winding and whirling, twisting and twirling, sliding and sprawling askew and slipping . . .

And they revel, vitriolic,
Diabolic,
Like a devil with the colic . . .
Topping! ripping!

O the smashing and O the crashing, O the hashing and slashing and snipping
My goods! . . . If I could give you a thrashing, send you home with a good sound whipping,
Bestial brood of a brutal mood, when the devil and I lay kissing and clipping . . .
Now curtseying, dipping,
Sweating and dripping,
Heel-and-toeing, to-and-froing, winking, blinking, bibbing and sipping . . .
How you frolic alcoholic,
How you rollick,
Me, a wretched melancholic,
Shaming, stripping!

IX.

This was the song that, like a distant bell
Exceeding light and thin,
Came at the dawning after nights of hell
From far away within;
Maybe from that unsearchable dark cell
It did begin
Where that old man, whose name I cannot tell,
Doth sit and spin.

"Empty the winds that can the clouds dispel,
And silence after din,
Water has virtue heats of wine to quell,
Fatigue gives pause to sin,
And rest seemed good to Adam when he fell,
As to his kin;
O well it is for me, O well, O well
This way to win."

X.

Yesterday, looking through my window-bars,
The whole sad sea was changed resplendently
By one great ship that sailed with raking spars
Into the sunshine; and her masts were three,
Red, splendid banners in the wind flew free,
Her blown white sails were thick with tempest-scars,
Twelve blazoned shields along her sides had she,
And round about her prow, the name of the Trinity.

By night she lit her lanterns from the stars
And on her decks held mighty jubilee
With wine poured out from strange Assyrian jars
And wheaten bread for all her company.
"O sirs," I cried, "whither with such good glee
Sail ye for merchandise or mighty wars?"
The Captain said: "Come down, take ship with me." . . .
Then with this song we weighed and sailed across the sea.

XI.

"We that speed on the shifting floor
Where the green waters vary
With many a song and stroke of oar,
Sail for the chase of the silver boar
That's horned and hoofed and hairy:
His eyes are bright, his bristles hoar,
And hung with golden bells galore;
O many a time he flees and flies across the uplands airy,
And fierce he is, and fleet he is, and light and wight and wary,
And bravely famed in faery lore
By many a hunter sought of yore.

"The dark, salt sea is bitter and frore,
The wind of comfort chary,
But though the drenching sleet downpour
And Manawyddan's green steeds roar,
We are not solitary,
For Rhiannon's sweet song-birds soar
About our heads for evermore.
With the first stroke for Jesus King, the second stroke for Mary,
The third stroke for the Trinity, the fourth for the land of faery,
By one, by two, by three, by four,
We reach the wonderful, weirded shore."

XII.

I am sailing to seek my name and the name of my nation . . . nay,
For I know the land that bore me, where the marvellous sea-beasts play,

Where are silver bells on the blackthorn boughs, and
golden bells on the may,
Where the magical Boar abideth, and the birds of Rhi-
annon,
And Adam and Eve and Enoch, and Arthur and Prester
John.
I have learnt the name of my city, and learnt to ask my
way,
And the whole ship's crew are my fellows too, and a
merry crew be they;
All day we sail with a favouring gale or gird ourselves
as the storm draws on,
And strive and cope with rudder and rope, and sing
aloud in the loud affray.

And other things I have learnt, and the first is still to say
To myself, "O unlearned fool!" and also, "Fool, be
gay!"
O well for the glorious chase of God, and well for the
hot assay!
Well for the noise of water, for the hills where the sun
has shone,
For the trees on the far horizon and the chart we may
not con!
Well for the terrible mer-wolf, and the caves where the
witch-wife lay
Till we touched her brows with the rowan boughs and
left her harmless clay!
Well for the land where the fir-trees stand and all we
witless wanderers wonne!
God bless the fools and the wise in schools, et gloria
tibi, Domine!

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